DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 358 PS 021 976

AUTHOR Young, Richard A.
TITLE Parental Influence in the Career and Educational Development of Children and Adolescents: An Action Perspective.
SPONS AGENCY Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Ottawa (Ontario).
PUB DATE 12 Apr 93
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Roundtable on Family, Community, and School Partnerships (5th, Atlanta, GA, April 12, 1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Career Choice; Career Development; Critical Incidents Method; Foreign Countries; Parent Attitudes; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Influence; Parent School Relationship; Secondary Education

ABSTRACT

A research program at the University of British Columbia has investigated parents' influence on the career development of their adolescent children, focusing on parents' intentions, the actual activities they engage in, the interpersonal structure in which the activities take place, the ways in which parents and young adults construct the domain of parental influence in career development, young adults' interpretation of parental influence, and the content of actual parent-adolescent conversations about career choice. Research methods included critical incident, Q-sort, narrative, and content analysis, using information from over 500 parents and adolescents. Study findings included the following: (1) parents indicated that they did not want to influence their children's specific occupational choice, though many had an acceptable range of occupations they hoped their children would aspire to; (2) school figured prominently in the critical incidents that parents engaged in with their children; (3) many parents felt that they could lay a suitable groundwork for their children's career development by influencing them broadly to become responsible and capable people; and (4) the constructs employed by parents and adolescents in constructing the domain of parental influence of career development included responsibility, open communication, active involvement of parents, and encouragement of autonomy. Schools can help parents be effective if they address parents' intentional, goal-directed activities. Contains 15 references. (AC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 364 358

Parental Influence in the Career and Educational Development of Children and Adolescents: An Action Perspective[1]

Presentation to the Fifth Annual International Roundtable on Family, Community, and School Partnerships, Atlanta, GA, April 12, 1993

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Richard Young
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Richard A. Young
University of British Columbia

Abstract

An overview of a research program at the University of British Columbia on parental influence on the career development of adolescents is provided. Salient findings and implications for the International Network on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning are discussed.

Parental influence in career development is an important dimension of the study of family, school, and community partnerships. Not least among the reasons why their children's education is important to parents are its career implications. Furthermore, families and schools provide the social context in which the young people themselves and others concerned about their welfare monitor and steer career development.

This presentation will provide an overview of our research program which addresses parental influence on the career development, and by implication, the educational development, of children and adolescents. This research program is based on an action theoretical approach, that is the subject of the research is the intentional, goal-directed behavior used by parents and children in the reciprocal influence process.

The presentation will provide a brief discussion of the background and theoretical perspective of the research program. Specific questions that have been addressed in this program will be identified and salient findings reported. Finally, I will draw some implications for the theme of this network, that is, the connection between families, schools and communities.

PS 021976

Background and Theoretical Perspective

This research is premised on the notion of intentional action which has recently emerged as an important paradigm in the study of human behavior (e.g., Bruner, 1986). Intentional action refers to the goal-directed behavior employed by agents as means of attaining certain ends. The focus of the research is less on the causal connection between parent-

1 The research reported here was supported by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The author is indebted to his co-researchers, particularly John D. Friesen and Ladislav Valach, who have contributed substantially to this program of research.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

child interaction and subsequent career development than on the how the parent and child jointly construct meaning in the course of their interaction, and how from the joint constructions, plans, expectations, and goals develop. The degree of parental influence is based on the "the relationship that parents have coconstructed and continually reconstruct with their children" (Maccoby, 1992, p. 1014).

Career generally refers to the sequence of events related to work and other life roles that constitute a life (Super, 1976). Career development refers to both the implementation of the self concept as one moves through developmental stages defined by particular life roles, such as one's role as student (Super, 1963), and to the unfolding interaction between the person and society in the development of career (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989). The phenomenological and social components of career development are evident in these descriptions. Thus, we assume that career represents a socially-constructed meaning system that subsumes education, schooling and other life experiences.

The primary assumption in this research program is that parents engage purposefully in their interactions with their children and in other actions that concern their children. Similarly, children engage purposively with their parents. The notion of intentional, goal-directed action undergirds, at least tacitly, the work of some of the researchers in this network.

Themes of the Research Program

To date, the research program has investigated the following main questions:

1. What are (a) the intentions of parents in influencing the career development of their children, (b) the actual activities that they engage in in doing so, (c) the interpersonal structure in which the activities take place, and (d) other characteristics of these activities?

2. How do parents and young adults construct the domain of parental influence in that career development of children and adolescents?

3. How do young adults interpret the influence of parents as part of their own goal-directed career and life plan?

4. What happens in actual parent-adolescent conversations about career development?

Methods

The methods used to address these questions have included critical incident, Q-sort, narrative, and content analysis. These methods have been largely qualitative, but quantitative methods have also been used. The rationale for the use of qualitative methods is that so many of the issues are related to interpretation. Career is an important personal construct that we use to make sense of our lives. Over 500 parents and adolescents have participated as subjects in these studies.

Results

Consistent with the methods used in this research program, the findings represent more of a qualitative understanding of the nature of parental influence in the area of career development than support of specific hypotheses. Some of the results that may be significant to the members of this Roundtable include the following.

1. As a general enunciated belief, parents say that they do not want to influence the specific occupational choice of their children (Young, in press). There seems to be a cultural belief in North America that choice of one's occupation is an individual right, much like the choice of one's spouse. However, many parents have an acceptable range of occupations to which they would like their children to aspire.

2. School figured in a prominent way in the critical incidents that parents engaged in with their children. In a study of 96 parents of children from Grade 5 to college sophomore, school was an explicit part of 27.4% of the incidents. It is clear that such activities as helping with homework, structuring the home environment to facilitate school work, meeting and intervening with teachers and other school officials, and advising about course selection, are considered by parents to be relevant to their children's educational success as well as their career development.

3. Many parents feel that they can lay a suitable groundwork for the career development of their children by influencing them broadly to become responsible and capable human beings (Young & Friesen, 1992). The notion of influencing children broadly is also represented in the concern that many parents both voice and suggest tacitly through their activities, that is, that they do not know enough specific vocational and educational information to guide their children appropriately in regard to many educational and vocational decisions. They feel that they must rely on outside resources. Thus, parents revert to more general principles of human development. As one parent stated. "If my children have made the best of the education and experiences afforded them as children and adolescents, then the specific career information and decisions that follow later will be appropriate."

4. The constructs that are employed by both parents and adolescents in constructing the domain of parental influence of career development include responsibility, open communication, active involvement of parents, encouragement of autonomy, and specific direction and guidance (Young, Friesen, & Dillabough, 1991). Although both parents and adolescents hold these constructs, responsibility and specific direction and guidance are constructs favored by parents, while the active involvement of parents and the encouragement of autonomy represent the constructs of certain groups of adolescents. These constructions reflect both the process of influencing and the content of influence.

5. Activities that parents intentionally undertake to influence the career development of their children occur both directly with the children themselves, that is, in face-to-face interaction and

independently of the children. The overwhelmingly greater number, as reported by parents, are in the former category (Young, Friesen, & Pearson, 1988). Among the most frequently used activities as reported by the parents are giving information and making suggestions. Once again, the use of an activity such as giving information needs to be understood in the context of item 3 above. It should also be pointed out that giving information and making suggestions need to be understood as aspects of complex molar activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). One can conclude that parents take advantage of many kinds of molar activities to use such actions as information giving and making suggestions to the young person.

6. Relative to the complexity of ecological field which emphasizes "the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27), most activities (75%) that parents reported as critical in the career development of their children were at the mesosystem level, that is, the activity included some involvement of or reference to the parent-child microsystem and some other system in which the child participates directly (Young & Friesen, 1986). In about one-third of these incidents, that other system was the school.

7. Young people construct parental influence in career development as part of the narrative of their lives (Young, Friesen, & Borychi, in press). From this perspective, parental influence cannot be seen as static and unchanging. Parental influence is continuously interpreted and reinterpreted by the young person from their current situation.

8. The results of our study of the actual conversations that parents and adolescents have regarding career development and educational plans will be reported in the American Educational Research Association Symposium, "International Research on School and Family Connections" (Young, et al. 1993, April). This research employs innovative data collection procedure that has practical implications for parent-adolescent communication about this topic (Young, Valach, Dillabough, Dover, & Matthes, 1993)

<u>Implications for Schools regarding Helping Parents with Children's Learning</u>

1. Schools can help parents be effective if they address those aspects of parental influence that are within the parent's purview. One activity that schools may wish to consider how to bring domains to be within the realm of intentional, goal-directed activity of parents.

2. Career is an important context for education in today's society. The construct of career has a strong influence in steering and directing action because it has both short- and long-term implications.

3. Children's activities at school and their achievement there are, in the parents' mind, important ingredients for the child's eventual career and life success. Moreover, as our research has pointed out, this is the area that many parents feel that they can be influential in their children's lives. Even if the parent is not actively present in the

school itself, does not negate the importance of the home-school connection that may be fostered by the parent in the home.

4. There is an important theoretical implication for school that pertains to the notion of intentional, goal-directed action. Much of what school is about has to do with this level of behavior, for example, students planning and taking action about their work in courses, about their extra-curricular activities, and about their long-term careers. Some British schools have made "action planning" an explicit part of their curriculum (e.g., Watts, 1992). One purpose of this activity is for students to internalize the process of planning and taking action. What is perhaps not recognized sufficiently is the extent to which that action is coconstructed by the student and teachers, parents, the curriculum, peers, and others.

Further Information

We welcome your inquiries and comments about this research program and your requests for papers.

Richard A. Young
Department of Counselling Psychology
University of British Columbia
5780 Toronto Road
Vancouver, BC V6T 1L2
Canada
Telephone: 604-822-6380
Fax: 604-822-2328
e-mail: ryoung@unixg.ubc.ca

References

Arthur, M. B., Hall, D. T., & Lawrence, B. S. (1989). Generating new directions in career theory: The case for a transdisciplinary approach. In M. B. Arthur, D. T. Hall, & B. S. Lawrence (Eds.), Handbook of career theory (pp. 7-25). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Bruner, J. (1986). Actual minds, possible worlds. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press.

Bronfenbrennner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Maccoby, E. E. (1992). The role of parents in the socialization of children: An historical overview. Developmental Psychology, 28, 1006-1017.

Super, D. E. (1963). Toward making a self-concept theory operational. In D. E. Super, R. Starishevesky, N. Matlin, & J. P. Jordaan (Eds.), Career development: Self-concept theory (pp. 17-32). New York: College Entrance Examination Board.

Super, D. E. (1976). Career education and the meaning of work. Monograph on Career Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Education.

Watts, A. G. (1992). Individual action planning: Issues and strategies. British Journal of Education and Work, 5, 47-63.

Young, R. A. (in press). Helping adolescents with career development; The active role of parents. Career Development Quarterly.

Young, R. A., et al. (1993, April). Parent-adolescent conversations about career development and educational plans. In R. Marques (Chair), International research on school and family connections. Symposium conducted at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Young, R. A., & Friesen, J. D. (1986). Parental interventions in the career development of children. (Report of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grant No. 498-84-0009). Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, Dept. of Counselling Psychology.

Young, R. A., & Friesen, J. D. (1992). The intentions of parents in influencing the career development of their children. Career Development Quarterly, 40, 198-207.

Young, R. A., Friesen, J. D., & Borychi, B. (in press). Narrative structure and parental influence in career development. Journal of Adolescence.

Young, R. A., Friesen, J. D., & Dillabough, J. (1991). Personal constructions of parental influence related to career development. Canadian Journal of Counselling, 25, 183-190.

Young, R. A., Friesen, J. D., & Pearson, H. M. (1988). Activities and interpersonal relations as dimensions of parental behavior in the career development of children. Youth and Society, 20, 29-45.

Young, R. A., Valach, L., Dillabough, J., Dover, C., & Matthes, G. (1993). The self-confrontation procedure: Investigating parent-adolescent conversations from an action perspective. Manuscript submitted for publication.